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THE MARTYR SEX.

EVER since that unfortunate affair in which the mother of mankind was so prominently concerned, the female sex might say, with Shylock, 'Sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.' They are, in fact, an incarnation of the Passive Voice—no mistake about it. 'Ah, gentle dames, it gars me greet,' as Burns pathetically says, to think on all the hardships and oppressions which you have undergone throughout the course of history, political and domestic. It is most wonderful that you can bear up your heads at all in the world. Most assuredly it could not be done except under favour of some inherent principle of fortitude, quite beyond all that your associate, Man, has ever displayed. For this reason, I propose to fix upon you the honourable style and title of the Martyr Sex.

As insanity is the more affecting when we observe its victim to be unconscious of the visitation, so does my heart bleed most particularly for the Martyr Sex, when I observe them undergoing severe oppressions without knowing it. So natural is suffering to the sex, or so accustomed are they to it, that they subject themselves spontaneously to enormous loads of trouble and torture, which no one would think of imposing upon them, and which they might easily avoid. It might almost be said, that suffering has a sort of fascination for them, drawing them placidly into it, whether they will or not. It seems in some mysterious way wrought up with their entire destiny.

Hence, at no period of the history of the Sex, do we find them free from some form of amateur affliction. At one time, it is one part of their persons, at another time, another, which is subjected to voluntary distress—but always some part. Not that the shifting is, so far as can be seen, designed as a measure of relief; it would rather appear the object simply is—to make every part bear its share in turn, and allow none to escape. Thus, about a hundred years ago, a lady went about with shoes that raised her heels three inches above the floor, and threw her whole person out of its proper balance, occasioning, of course, a severe strain upon certain muscles, attended by constant pain. A little later, her feet might have been found restored to their right level; but, as if to make up for this, and allow no interval of misery, a tower of hair, pomatum, flour, pins, and pinnars, had been reared on the head, such as an inquisitor might have considered himself very ingenious in devising, as a means of undoing the convictions of heretics, or bringing round a Jew to Christianity. Verily, it was a most portentous engineering for the affliction of female humanity; but how heroically it was endured! A whole generation bore it without a sigh!

It often cost them their night's rest merely to get it properly put in order—for, dressing being in those days very elaborate, the attendants had to prepare some ladies one day for a party that was to take place the next. They would sit, however, in a chair all night, in order to preserve the structure in all its integrity, sleeping only by snatches, and often waking in terror lest something might be going wrong. Talk of the martyrs of science—Galileo in prison, Bruno at the stake. These men had something of importance in view to sustain them in their trials. Give me the Martyr Sex, who sacrifice ease and convenience, without having any adventitious principle whatever to compensate for and support them under their sufferings.

In more recent times, we have seen the entire Sex submitting to torture in a middle ground—namely, the waist—with an equal degree of magnanimity. The corsets also formed an engine which would have perfectly fitted the purposes of the Inquisition; indeed, there were some ingenious devices of the Holy Office which did not greatly differ from it. It might almost shake the common-sense of admiration for martyrly sufferings, to find that every little girl in England was for some years both able and willing to endure a regular torture, without apparently having the least idea of making any merit by her patience. Present pains, possible consequences—such as red noses, bad breath, permanent ill health, death itself—were made light of. There being no imaginable good end to be served by it, was nothing to the point. The corsets were, for a time, a proud symbol of the martyr power of the Sex. You would see an example set forth in each milliner's window, carefully disposed under a glass-shade, as indicating the pride they felt in it as a sort of badge of honour. It is to be hoped that a few special copies will be preserved in our antiquarian museums, and, if possible, they should be such as can be certified to have killed their wearers, in order to shew to future generations what the women of our age could submit to in that particular line—not generally of course, for it is to be expected that the women of the future will have equal sufferings in some other walk to boast of.

It is not always, indeed, that the Sex have a master torment, like tight stays, to endure; but certainly they are never without some source of either anguish or inconvenience to keep their martyr power in exercise. For one thing, they are sadly afflicted with over-large shoes. Strange to say, though there are artists pretending to be ladies' shoemakers, the sex never get shoes sufficiently small. Every now and then, they are receiving some monstrous affront, in the form of a pair of shoes that might hold sufficient meal for a pudding besides their feet. From this cause flow

certain pains and penalties in the form of corns and bunions, insuring that they shall never take a step in life without being reminded of the doom of suffering which has been passed upon them. To speak of the simple incommodations which they suffer from dress were endless. At one time, they are all blown out into sleeve, so that a miscellaneous dinner-party looks like a series of men and women with feather-beds stuck between each pair. At another time, the sleeve, while moderate in the region of the upper arm, is fashioned wide at the bottom, as if to allow of the fair wearers laughing in it—the joke, however, being all against themselves, seeing that the pendulous part is a source of continual trouble and worry, from its trailing through every sauce and tart that may be at table, till it becomes a kind of geological phenomenon, in the illustration which it affords of the succession of deposits and incrustations. Or the swelling falls mainly into a lower part of the dress, taking the form of a monstrous prolongation of skirts, and insuring that the fair Martyrs shall act as scavengers upon every street in which they promenade. I hardly know a more interesting sight than that of a young lady going to school on a wet day, with books to carry in one hand, and an umbrella to sustain in the other. To see the struggles she makes in such circumstances to keep her skirts from dragging in the mud, or the patience with which she submits to their unavoidably doing so, and to think of the sad condition of her lower extremities all the time—to reflect, moreover, that all this trouble and suffering could be avoided by merely having skirts of a sufficient, but not over-sufficient length—presents such an affecting picture of evils voluntarily encountered and heroically sustained, as but rarely occurs in the course of human life. It is justly held as a strong proof of patience, that you should calmly submit to be spat upon, or have mud thrown upon you by some infuriated crowd; but here is a gentle creature who literally goes out every day to endure the certain contact of these nuisances, and comes home to dinner not in much better plight than one who has sat (unpopularly) in the pillory for an hour. I really must give such martyrdom the meed of my admiration; and the more so, that I feel myself, under the hardening effects of worldly common-sense, totally unprepared to go through such hardships without some useful end to be served by it.

The last example of what may be called the Martyrdom of Inconvenience which the Sex have shewn, is to be found in a form of bonnet adapted for summer wear, in which the front comes only to about an inch behind the forehead, so as to leave the face fully exposed to the attacks of the sun (when there is one) and the unmitigated gaze of the beaux. There is something very remarkable in this fashion, for a great number of ladies find it absolutely indispensable to add to this abbreviation of a bonnet a sort of supplement of silk called an *ugly*, wherewith to screen the face from becoming an absolute photograph. A couple of inches added to the bonnet itself would serve the end; but this would give a regular and not inelegant protection. It would, therefore, entirely prevent inconvenience, and so thwart the Sex in their martyrly propensities. Such a thing is not to be thought of. On the contrary, either to suffer from sunlight without an *ugly*, or to suffer from clumsiness with one, enables the unfortunate Sex to indulge in its favourite passion to the fullest extent possible in such cases. Admirable portion of creation! what merits are yours, what praise is called for fully to requite you! But, indeed, it must be quite impossible ever to make sufficient acknowledgment of that wonderful power of endurance for its own sake which you shew in the most trivial, as in the most important phases of life!

I therefore quit the subject with a humiliating sense of my utter incompetency to do it entire justice. I weep and wonder—my very soul thrills with the pathos

of woman's martyr position on the earth and her volunteer sufferings above all. But I would vainly attempt to utter all I feel. I must leave it to each bearded fellow-creature, as he walks through the wilderness of this world, to behold with a sympathising eye and spirit an endurance so affecting, and endeavour to compensate it, to the individual sufferers within his reach, by every consolation and every reward he may have it in his power to bestow.

THE YOUNGEST BRITISH COLONY.

Which is the youngest British colony? Simple as the question seems, it may be doubted, considering the remarkable increase of late years in the number of John Bull's colonial progeny, whether the most experienced red-tapist of Downing Street could answer it without some hesitation. At least a dozen infant communities occur at once to the recollection. There is Port Philip, lately rechristened by the royal name of Victoria, and now seemingly in a fair way to be smothered in its cradle by a deluge of gold-dust. There is the Hudson's Bay Company's little Cinderella of Vancouver's Island, with its neglected coal-mines, and other mineral riches. Then we have the precocious 'Canterbury' pet, the 'young Virginia' of New Zealand. Nor must we forget the storm- vexed colony of Labuan, ushered into existence amid typhoons and parliamentary debates—nor the small castaways, growing up in secluded islets and corners—in the Falkland Islands, the Auckland Islands, on the Mosquito Shore, and in the far Eastern Seas. It is in one of these directions that most persons would probably be inclined to cast an inquiring glance before attempting to answer the question with which these remarks are prefaced. It is not likely that many would at once be able to recall to mind the fact, that an important British colony, dating its official existence from the 22d of March 1851, has suddenly sprung up in the interior of Africa—a colony already possessing an efficient legislature, a handsome revenue, and several flourishing towns, with churches, schools, a respectable press, and other adjuncts, of civilisation. A brief description of this remarkable colony may serve to awaken for it an interest which its future progress, if at all corresponding with the past, will probably keep alive.

There is some difficulty in describing the 'Orange River Sovereignty'—for such is the long and rather awkward name by which this settlement is now known—so as to convey a correct idea of its situation without the aid of a map. That the Cape Colony occupies the southern coast of the African continent, and that the colony of Natal is on the south-eastern coast, are facts of which few readers will need to be reminded. Will it, then, be sufficient to say, that the 'sovereignty' in question is situated in the interior, between these two colonies, having the Cape on the south, and Natal on the east? It will be necessary to refer briefly to the manner in which it acquired its rank as a colony, and its peculiar name. Just two hundred years ago, in the year 1652, the Cape Colony was founded by the Dutch; and about fifty years ago, it came into the possession of our own government. During these two centuries, the colony has been constantly extending itself towards the east and north, just as the British settlements in North America, which were founded about the same time, have been ever since extending their borders towards the west and south, or as the settlements of Eastern Australia have been spreading to the west, south, and north. It is a natural movement of colonisation, and there seems to be no means of checking it, even if any advantage were to be gained by doing so.

As the American backwoodsmen, in their progress westward, reached at last the boundary-streams—as they were once considered—of the Mississippi and the Ohio, so the South-African colonists gradually found

their way to the great Orange River, which, flowing nearly across the continent, from east to west, formed a sort of natural limit to the old colony. But beyond this boundary, extensive plains and undulating downs, covered with nutritious herbage like the American prairies, spread out invitingly towards the distant northern horizon. The exterminating wars among the native tribes had left these grassy plains almost wholly unoccupied. You might travel over them for days without meeting a human being, or any traces of human possession, except here and there the decaying huts and bleaching skeletons of the former inhabitants. The feeble remnants of these tribes had sought refuge in the recesses of the neighbouring mountains, where some of them, in their dire extremity, sustained a horrid existence by cannibalism, which revolting custom still further diminished their numbers, and has only recently been suppressed. The Cape 'boers,' or farmers, rich as the patriarchs of old in cattle and sheep, and straitened like them for pasture, gradually found their way over the river into these fruitful and vacant plains. At first, they crossed only in small numbers, and with no intention of remaining permanently. But the abolition of slavery, the mismanaged Caffre wars, and some unpopular measures of the Cape government, suddenly gave a great impulse to the emigration.

About fifteen years ago, some thousands of Dutch colonists sold their farms, packed their household gear in their huge capacious wagons, and with their wives and children—in all, at least 10,000 souls—accompanied by myriads of cattle, sheep, and horses, crossed the Orange River, and plunged into the vast wilderness beyond. Some spread themselves over the rich pastures in the country lying immediately north of that river, and now forming the infant colony which is presently to be described. Others penetrated far to the north, forded the Vaal or Yellow River, and planted corn-fields and vineyards on the fertile slopes of the Kashaan Mountains, where they still maintain themselves as a self-governed and thriving community. One small band of bold adventurers found their way to the verdant but fever-haunted plains about Delagoa Bay, whence the few survivors were presently driven by the destructive ravages of the pestilence. But the main column of the emigrants, turning to the right, crossed the lofty chain of the Drakenberg—the 'Rocky Mountains' of Africa—and descended into the well-watered valleys and woody lowlands of Natal. The romantic but melancholy story of the sufferings, the labours, the triumphs, and the reverses which filled up the subsequent years—how some of the emigrants were surprised and massacred by the jealous tribes of the interior, and others were treacherously slaughtered by their professed ally, the blood-thirsty chief of the Zulus—and how the exasperated survivors turned upon their assailants, broke their power, and scattered them; how they planted towns, formed a regular government, and set up an independent republic; all these, and many similar events, must be left for the future historians of South Africa to record. Neither is it necessary to refer here to the policy which led our government afterwards to extend its authority over the lands thus conquered and settled by the emigrants, or to the manner in which this authority, at first resisted, was finally established. Natal was thus made a British province in 1842. Many of the boers, naturally enough disliking the new government thus forced upon them, retraced their course over the Drakenberg, back into the upland plains of the interior. Here they were left pretty much to themselves, until the year 1848, when Sir Harry Smith proclaimed the extension of the Queen's supremacy over the whole of the territory situated between the Orange and Vaal Rivers; but, as has been already said, it was not until March of last year that this acquisition was finally sanctioned, and the new colony established by an act of the imperial government.

The Vaal River—sometimes called the Nu Gariep, and sometimes the Yellow River—is the principal tributary of the Orange River; indeed, it is so large an affluent, that some geographers have doubted, as in the case of the Mississippi and the Missouri, which should properly be considered the main stream. These rivers, the Orange and the Vaal, rising near together in the Drakenberg chain, take a wide circuit, the one to the south-west, the other to the north-west, and flow each a distance of about 400 miles before their junction. The territory which they thus enclose is nearly as large as England, comprising between 40,000 and 50,000 square miles. It is inhabited by about 80,000 natives, of various Bechuana, Namaqua, and half-caste tribes, and by some 15,000 or 20,000 colonists of European origin. Over all these inhabitants, colonists and natives, the British sovereignty has been proclaimed. Subject to this supremacy, the native chiefs and tribes are still left to manage their own affairs, according to their original laws and customs. But in order to indicate clearly and decisively the fact, that the royal authority is now paramount in this region whenever Her Majesty's government chooses to exert it, the name of the Orange River Sovereignty has been given to the whole territory.

The portion of this territory which is properly a British settlement—or, in other words, which is inhabited by Dutch and English colonists, is in extent about two-thirds of the whole. It is subdivided into four districts, for each of which a stipendiary magistrate has been appointed. These magistrates, with eight unofficial members of council—who are all respectable landowners—form, in conjunction with the 'British resident,' the legislature of the colony. The title of the Resident is borrowed from the official system of India, and was originally given to him when acting as a government commissioner for the protection of the native tribes; but his office is at present simply that of a colonial governor.

The extensive country which is thus governed, cannot be better described than in the words of Sir Harry Smith, who, in a dispatch written in January 1848, gives the following account of the whole region, which he had just traversed, on his way from the Cape to Natal. He describes it as 'a country well fitted for the pasturage of cattle, and covered in every direction with large game. It is,' he adds, 'strongly undulating; and although badly watered, well adapted for the construction of dams; and the soil being generally rich, it is capable, if irrigated, of producing every species of grain. It is miserably destitute of trees, frequently even of bush, and is thickly studded with abrupt and isolated hills, whose height frequently approaches that of mountains. Over the greater part of this tract of country, not a single native is to be seen; nor for many years, if ever, has it been inhabited by one. The gardens of the emigrants (boers) are in many places very good; their houses miserable, as they have been deterred from exhausting their little remaining capital by building on a doubtful and precarious tenure. That objection to the increase of their comfort, if the word be applicable, will now, I trust, be happily removed.' The absence of trees, of which Sir Harry speaks, is believed to have originated from the same cause which occasions a similar want in the prairies of America—that is, the native custom of burning down the grass every winter, to fertilise the soil. Where trees have been planted recently, they have grown well. The apple, pear, peach, and other fruit-trees of temperate climates, are found to thrive and produce abundantly. The whole country, it should be added, is a great plateau, elevated 2000 or 3000 feet above the level of the sea. The climate is, therefore, cooler than in Natal, which is situated in the same latitude, but at a lower elevation.

It was not till Sir Harry Smith had thus proclaimed

the royal supremacy, in 1848, that English colonists began to establish themselves in any considerable numbers in the country. But they then soon found their way thither, principally as traders, and settled in the new towns which quickly sprang up in the several districts. Bloem Fontein, the capital, is now almost wholly an English town. It has its municipality; its weekly newspaper—printed in English and Dutch; its English and 'Dutch Reformed' churches, and Wesleyan Chapel; its government school; its market; and various other appurtenances of a flourishing town, all of which have come into existence since Sir Harry Smith made his flying visit to the province in 1848, and proclaimed it subject to Her Majesty's supremacy. Such magic resides in a British governor's proclamation!

But the growth of Bloem Fontein, rapid as it has been, is not so striking as that of another town. There is a well-known story of a traveller, in a newly-settled part of North America, inquiring his way at a lonely hut to a 'city' which made a conspicuous figure in some land-speculator's map, and receiving the startling information, that he was then standing in the principal square. An adventure of much the same nature befell a traveller in South Africa, who, in February 1850, attempted, while on his way from Bloem Fontein to Natal, to discover the newly-founded town of Harrismith.

'At length,' he writes, 'having reached the eastern side of the mountain, I halted, and determined to go in search of this new-born town—a future city in our vast empire. Taking my attendant, Andries, with me, we proceeded to an elevation, where I felt sure it must come into view. We were disappointed. Not a spire, nor chimney, nor hut could be seen; and so we walked on towards another elevation. On our way, we came to an emigrant settler, busily employed in brick-making; and from him I learned that we had taken the left-hand road instead of the right, after we passed the last stream. We were about a mile from the spot marked out as the town, but no houses are built, nor are any persons residing there; so I did not deem it worth while to proceed further in that direction.' In May of the same year, 'two or three houses' are reported to have been built; in 1851, they are springing up rapidly; and at the latest date, the 9th of last January, we hear of an actual flourishing little town, with school-house, flour-mill, and bustling and increasing trade.

The progressing town, however, had its difficulties, both physical and political, to contend with. The correspondent has to report, that 'the postal arrangements still continue unsatisfactory and vexatious, no post having been received from Bloem Fontein for the last two months; and,' he indignantly adds, 'to make matters worse, the late magistrate's clerk and post-master has resigned, owing to grave charges having been preferred against him by a party faction who would rule public opinion.' But he consoles himself with the judicious reflection, that 'time and imported respectable intelligence will remedy this unhappy state of things, in the changes which small communities undergo.' It is satisfactory to learn, that in spite of the machinations of faction, the citizens managed to enjoy themselves when a suitable occasion offered. 'New-Year's Day,' we are told, 'was celebrated with more than ordinary spirit. A shooting-match took place, after which a public supper and quadrille-party came off, which finished the pleasures of the day. The next day, lovers of the turf had their enjoyment in the establishment of races.' And then we have, duly recorded in the well-known *Racing-Calendar* style, the fortunes of the competitors, for the 'Untried' Cup, the 'Harrismith Plate,' the 'Ladies' Purse,' and the 'Hack-Race;' and it is stated that 'one of the horses was sold immediately after the races for L.40,' which would seem to be considered a high figure in that region. It is further announced, 'that another year will probably

see the establishment of a fair, which will give our interior farmers and friends an opportunity of rendering a journey to Harrismith both profitable and pleasurable, as such an occasion will doubtless attract buyers of cattle, horses, sheep, wool, butter, tallow, grain, &c., from Natal.' And the correspondent is 'happy to state, that several farmers are settling upon their farms in the neighbourhood of the town, which will tend to give confidence, and increase the value of land in its vicinity.'

Thus, in less than two years, a real, bustling, hopeful little town had sprung into existence, with all the genuine characteristics of an English community. Education and trade, races and quadrilles, were already flourishing. The well-known political parties, the Buffs and the Blues, the foes of corruption and the friends of established institutions, were already arraying themselves in hostile ranks. In two years more, we may expect to receive the first numbers of the *Harrismith Gazette* and the *Harrismith Independent*, the 'organs' of the respective parties; and to learn through their valuable columns, that the 'Harrismith Agricultural and Commercial Bank' has declared its first annual dividend of 10 per cent., and that the new 'Harrismith Assembly-Rooms' were thrown open, on the auspicious anniversary of the royal birthday, to a large and select assemblage of the rank, fashion, and beauty of the city and its neighbourhood.

The writer from whose letter some of the foregoing quotations are made, strongly recommends that the government should offer 'unstinted encouragement and liberal assistance' to promote emigration from Great Britain; and considers that, if this were done, 'thousands of hardy English and Scotch farmers would avail themselves of the advantages which the country offers.' This is possible; but at the same time, it should be known, that the excitement among the native tribes, caused by the war in Caffreland, had extended across the Orange River into the sovereignty, and that much confusion, and, unfortunately, some bloodshed, had ensued. These disorders, it is true, were only local; but it is evident that the neighbourhood of some 80,000 barbarians must, for some time to come, be a source of considerable embarrassment and danger to all settlers in the new colony. In time, no doubt, with the progress of civilisation, this danger will be removed; and the natives may become, as in New Zealand, a source of wealth to the colony, as useful labourers—like the 'skipping Caffres' under the brickmaker's instructions, or peaceful cultivators of the soil. At present, however, the peril from this source is so evident and so serious, that a warning reference to it could not with propriety be omitted in any description of this otherwise promising settlement.

THE SECRET.

JEAN BAPTISTE VÉRON, a native, it was understood, of the south of France, established himself as a merchant at Havre-de-Grâce in 1788, being then a widower with one child, a young boy. The new-comer's place of business was on the south quay, about a hundred yards west of the custom-house. He had brought letters of high recommendation from several eminent Paris firms; his capital was ascertained to be large; and soon, moreover, approving himself to be a man of keen mercantile discernment, and measured, peremptory, unswerving business habits, it is not surprising that his commercial transactions speedily took a wide range, or that, at the end of about fifteen years, M. Véron was pronounced by general consent to be the wealthiest merchant of the commercial capital of northern France. He was never, albeit, much of a favourite with any class of society: his manner was too brusque, decided, unbending—his speech too curt, frequently too bitter, for that; but he managed to steer

his course in very difficult times quite as safely as those who put themselves to great pains and charges to obtain popularity. He never expressed—publicly at least—any preference for Royalism, Republicanism, or Imperialism; for fleur-de-lis, bonnet-rouge, or tricolore: in short, Jean Baptiste Véron was a stern, taciturn, self-absorbed man of business; and as nothing else was universally concluded, till the installation of a *quasi* legitimacy by Napoleon Bonaparte, when a circumstance, slight in itself, gave a clearer significance to the cold, haughty, repellent expression which played habitually about the merchant's gray, deep-set eyes, and thin, firmly-compressed lips. His newly-engraved private card read thus:—'J. B. de Véron, *Mon Séjour*, Ingouville.' *Mon Séjour* was a charming suburban domicile, situate upon the Côte, as it is usually termed—a sloping eminence on the north of Le Havre, which it commands, and now dotted with similar residences, but at the period we are writing of, very sparsely built upon. Not long after this assumption of the aristocratic prefix to his name, it was discovered that he had insinuated himself into the very narrow and exclusive circle of the De Mérodes, who were an unquestionable fragment of the old noblesse, damaged, it is true, almost irretrievably in purse, as their modest establishment on the Côte too plainly testified; but in pedigree as untainted and resplendent as in the palmiest days of the Capets. As the Chevalier de Mérode and his daughter Mademoiselle Henriette-Delphine-Hortense-Marie-Chasse-Loup de Mérode—described as a tall, fair, and extremely meagre damsel, of about thirty years of age—were known to be rigidly uncompromising in all matters having reference to ancestry, it was concluded that Jean Baptiste de Véron had been able to satisfy his noble friends, that although *de facto* a merchant from the sad necessities of the evil time, he was *de jure* entitled to take rank and precedence with the illustrious though decayed nobility of France. It might be, too, as envious gossips whispered, that any slight flaw or break in the chain of De Véron's patrician descent, had been concealed or overlooked in the glitter of his wealth, more especially if it was true, as rumour presently began to circulate, that the immense sum—in French eyes and ears—of 300,000 francs (L.12,000) was to be settled upon Mademoiselle de Mérode and her heirs on the day which should see her united in holy wedlock with Eugène de Véron, by this time a fine-looking young man, of one or two-and-twenty, and, like ninety-nine in every hundred of the youth of France, strongly prejudiced against the pretensions of mere birth and hereditary distinction.

Rumour in this instance was correctly informed. 'Eugène,' said M. de Véron, addressing his son in his usual cold positive manner, and at the same time locking his private *écritoire*, the hand of the clock being just on the stroke of five, the hour for closing—'I have a matter of importance to inform you of. All differences between me and the Chevalier de Mérode relative to your marriage with his daughter, Mademoiselle de Mérode, are'—

'Hein!' ejaculated Eugène, suddenly whirling round upon his stool, and confronting his father. 'Hein!'

'All differences, I say,' resumed M. de Véron with unruffled calm and decision, 'between myself and the chevalier are arranged à l'instant; and the contract of marriage will be ready, for your and Mademoiselle de Mérode's signature, on Monday next at two precisely.'

'Mine and Mademoiselle de Mérode's!' repeated the astounded son, who seemed half doubtful whether he saw or heard aright.

'Yes. No wonder you are surprised. So distinguished a connection could hardly, under the circumstances, have been hoped for; and it would have been cruel to have given you any intimation on the subject whilst there was a chance of the negotiation issuing unfavourably. Your wife and you will, for the present, at

all events, take up your abode at *Mon Séjour*; and I must consequently look out at once for a smaller, a more bachelor-suiting residence.'

'My wife and me!' echoed Véron junior with the same air of stupid amazement as before—'My wife and me!' Recovering a little, he added: 'Confound it, there must be some mistake here. Do you know, *mon père*, that this Mademoiselle de Mérode is not at all to my taste? I would as soon marry'—

'No folly, Eugène, if you please,' interrupted M. de Véron. 'The affair, as I have told you, is decided. You will marry Mademoiselle de Mérode; or if not, he added with iron inflexibility of tone and manner—'Eugène de Véron is likely to benefit very little by his father's wealth, which the said Eugène will do well to remember is of a kind not very difficult of transference beyond the range of the law of inheritance which prevails in France. The leprosy of the Revolution,' continued M. de Véron as he rose and put on his hat, 'may indeed be said to have polluted our very hearths, when we find children settling up their opinions, and likings and dislikings, forsooth! against their fathers' decision, in a matter so entirely within the parental jurisdiction as that of a son or daughter's marriage.'

Eugène did not reply; and after assisting his father—who limped a little in consequence of having severely sprained his ankle some eight or ten days previously—to a light one-horse carriage in waiting outside, he returned to the office, and resumed his seat, still in a maze of confusion, doubt, and dismay. 'How could,' he incoherently muttered—'how could my father—how could anybody suppose that—How could he especially be so blind as not to have long ago perceived—What a contrast!' added Eugène de Véron jumping up, breaking into passionate speech, and his eyes sparkling as if he was actually in presence of the dark-eyed divinity whose image filled his brain and loosed his tongue—'what a contrast! Adeline, young, rosy, beautiful as Spring, lustrous as Juno, graceful as Hebe! Oh, *par exemple*, Mademoiselle de Mérode, you, with your high blood and skinny bones, must excuse me. And poor, too, poor as Adeline! Decidedly, the old gentleman must be crazed, and—let me see—Ay, to be sure, I must confer with Edouard at once.'

Eugène de Véron had only one flight of stairs to ascend in order to obtain this conference, Edouard le Blanc, the brother of Adeline, being a principal clerk in the establishment. Edouard le Blanc readily and sincerely consoled with his friend upon the sudden obscuration of his and Adeline's hopes, adding that he had always felt a strong misgiving upon the subject; and after a lugubrious dialogue, during which the clerk hinted nervously at a circumstance which, looking at the unpleasant turn matters were taking, might prove of terrible import—a nervousness but very partially relieved by Eugène's assurance, that, come what may, he would take the responsibility in that particular entirely upon himself, as, indeed, he was bound to do—the friends left the office, and wended their way to Madame le Blanc's, Ingouville. There the lover forgot, in Adeline's gay exhilarating presence and conversation, the recent ominous and exasperating communication from his father; while Edouard proceeded to take immediate counsel with his mother upon the altered aspect of affairs, not only as regarded Adeline and Eugène de Véron, but more particularly himself, Edouard le Blanc.

Ten minutes had hardly passed by ordinary reckoning—barely one by Eugène de Véron's—when his interview with the charming Adeline was rudely broken in upon by Madame le Blanc, a shrewd, prudent woman of the world, albeit that in this affair she had somewhat lost her balance, tempted by the glittering prize offered for her daughter's acceptance, and for a time apparently within her reach. The mother's tone and manner

were stern and peremptory. 'Have the kindness, Monsieur Eugène de Véron, to bid Adeline adieu at once. I have a serious matter to talk over with you alone. Come!'

Adeline was extremely startled at hearing her rich lover thus addressed, and the carnation of her glowing cheeks faded at once to lily paleness, whilst Eugène's features flushed as quickly to deepest crimson. He stammered out his willingness to attend madame immediately, and hastily kissing Adeline's hand, followed the unwelcome intruder to another room.

'So, Monsieur Eugène,' began Madame le Blanc, 'this ridiculous wooing—of which, as you know, I never heartily approved—is at an end. You are, I hear, to marry Mademoiselle de Mérode in the early part of next week.'

'Madame le Blanc,' exclaimed the young man, 'what is it you are saying? I marry Mademoiselle de Mérode next or any other week! I swear to you, by all that is true and sacred, that I will be torn in pieces by wild horses before I break faith with'—

'Chut! chut!' interrupted Madame Le Blanc; 'you may spare your oaths. The sentimental bavardage of boys in love will be lost upon me. You will, as you ought, espouse Mademoiselle de Mérode, who is, I am told, a very superior and amiable person; and as to Adeline, she will console herself. A girl with her advantages will always be able to marry sufficiently well, though not into the family of a millionaire. But my present business with you, Monsieur Eugène de Véron, relates to a different and much more important matter. Edouard has just confided to me a very painful circumstance. You have induced him to commit not only a weak but a highly criminal act: he has let you have, without Monsieur de Véron's consent or knowledge, two thousand francs, upon the assurance that you would either reimburse that sum before his accounts were balanced, or arrange the matter satisfactorily with your father.'

'But, Madame le Blanc'—

'Neither of which alternatives,' persisted that lady, 'I very plainly perceive, you will be able to fulfil, unless you comply with Monsieur de Véron's wishes; and if you have any real regard for Adeline, you will signify that acquiescence without delay, for her brother's ruin would in a moral sense be hers also. Part of the money has, I understand, been squandered on the presents you have made her: they shall be returned'—

'Madame le Blanc,' exclaimed the excited young man, 'you will drive me mad! I cannot, will not give up Adeline; and as for the paltry sum of money you speak of—my money as it may fairly be considered—that shall be returned to-morrow morning.'

Madame le Blanc did not speak for a few seconds, and then said: 'Very well, mind you keep your promise. To-morrow is, you are aware, the Fête Dieu: we have promised Madame Carson of the Grande Rue to pass the afternoon and evening at her house, where we shall have a good view of the procession. Do you and Edouard call on us there, as soon as the affair is arranged. I will not detain you longer at present. Adieu! Stay, stay—by this door, if you please. I cannot permit you to see Adeline again, at all events till this money transaction is definitively settled.'

'As you have now slept upon the proposal I communicated to you yesterday afternoon,' said M. de Véron, addressing his son on the following morning at the conclusion of a silent breakfast—'you may perhaps be prepared with a more fitting answer than you were then?'

Eugène warmly protested his anxiety to obey all his father's reasonable commands; but in this case compliance was simply impossible, forasmuch as he, Eugène, had already irrevocably pledged his word, his heart, his honour, in another quarter, and could not, therefore, nay, would not, consent to poison his future existence

by uniting himself with Mademoiselle de Mérode, for whom, indeed, he felt the profoundest esteem, but not the slightest emotion of affection or regard.

'Your word, your honour, your heart—you should have added your fortune,' replied M. de Véron with frigid, slowly-distilled, sarcastic bitterness—'are irrevocably engaged, are they, to Adeline le Blanc, sister of my collecting clerk—daughter of a deceased sous-lieutenant of the line'—

'Of the Imperial Guard,' interposed Eugène.

'Who aids her mother to eke out a scanty pension by embroidery'—

'Very superior, artistic embroidery,' again interjected the son.

'Be it so. I have not been quite so unobservant, Eugène, of certain incidents, as you and your friends appear to have supposed. But time proves all things, and the De Mérodes and I can wait.'

Nothing further passed till M. de Véron rose to leave the room, when his son, with heightened colour and trembling speech, although especially aiming at a careless indifference of tone and manner, said: 'Sir—sir—one word, if you please. I have a slight favour to ask. There are a few debts, to the amount of about two thousand francs, which I wish to discharge immediately—this morning, in fact.'

'Debts to the amount of about two thousand francs, which you wish to discharge immediately—this morning, in fact,' slowly repeated De Véron, fixing on his son a triumphant, mocking glance, admirably seconded by the curve of his thin white lips. 'Well, let the bills be sent to me. If correct and fair, they shall be paid.'

'But—but, father, one, the chief item, is a debt of honour!'

'Indeed! Then your honour is pledged to others besides Mademoiselle *la brodeuse*? I have only to say, that in that case I *will not* assist you.' Having said this, M. de Véron, quite regardless of his son's angry expostulations, limped out of the apartment, and shortly after, the sound of carriage-wheels announced his departure to Le Havre. Eugène, about an hour afterwards followed, vainly striving to calm his apprehensions by the hope, that before the day for balancing Edouard's accounts arrived, he should find his father in a more Christian-like and generous mood, or, at anyrate, hit upon some means of raising the money.

The day, like the gorgeous procession that swept through the crowded streets, passed slowly and uninterruptedly away in M. de Véron's place of business, till about half-past four, when that gentleman directed a porter, who was leaving the private office, to inform M. le Blanc, that he, M. de Véron, wished to speak with him immediately. On hearing this order, Eugène looked quickly up from the desk at which he was engaged, to his father's face; but he discerned nothing on that impassive tablet either to dissipate or confirm his fear.

'Edouard le Blanc,' said M. de Véron with mild suavity of voice the instant the summoned clerk presented himself, 'it so chances that I have no further occasion for your services'—

'Sir!—sir!' gasped the terrified young man.

'You are,' continued M. de Véron, 'entitled to a month's salary, in lieu of that period of notice—one hundred francs, with which you may credit yourself in the cash account you will please to balance and bring me as quickly as possible.'

'Sir!—sir!' again bewilderedly iterated the panic-stricken clerk, as he turned distractedly from father to son—'Sir!'

'My words are plain enough, I think,' observed M. de Véron, coolly tapping and opening his snuff-box from which he helped himself to a hearty pinch. 'You are discharged with one hundred francs, a month's salary in lieu of warning, in your pocket. You have now only to bring your accounts; they are correct, of

course; I, finding them so, sign your *livret*, and there is an end of the matter.'

Edouard le Blanc made a step or two towards the door, and then, as if overwhelmed with a sense of the hopelessness of further concealment, turned round, threw himself with a cry of terror and despair at M. de Véron's feet, and poured forth a wild, sobbing, scarcely intelligible confession of the fault or crime of which he had been guilty, through the solicitations of M. Eugène, who had, he averred, received every farthing of the amount in which he, Edouard le Blanc, acknowledged himself to be a defaulter.

'Yes!—yes!' exclaimed the son; 'Edouard gave the money into my hands, and if there is any blame, it is mine alone.'

M. de Véron listened with a stolid, stony apathy to all this, save for a slight glimmer of triumph that, spite of himself, shone out at the corners of his half-closed eyes. When the young man had ceased sobbing and exclaiming, he said: 'You admit, Edouard le Blanc, that you have robbed me of nearly two thousand francs, at, you say, the solicitation of my son—an excuse, you must be aware, of not the slightest legal weight; no more than if your pretty sister, Mademoiselle Adeline, who, I must be permitted to observe, is not altogether, I suspect, a stranger to this affair—Hear me out, Messieurs, if you please: I say your excuse has no more legal validity, than if your sister had counselled you to commit this felony. Now, mark me, young man: it is just upon five o'clock. At half-past seven precisely, I shall go before a magistrate, and cause a warrant to be issued for your apprehension. To-morrow morning, consequently, the brother of Mademoiselle le Blanc will either be an incarcerated felon, or, which will suit me just as well, a proclaimed fugitive from justice.'

'One moment—one word, for the love of Heaven, before you go!' exclaimed Eugène. 'Is there any mode, any means whereby Edouard may be rescued from this frightful, this unmerited calamity—this irretrievable ruin?'

'Yes,' rejoined M. de Véron, pausing for an instant on the outer threshold, 'there is one mode, Eugène, and only one. What it is, you do not require to be told. I shall dine in town to-day; at seven, I shall look in at the church of Notre Dame, and remain there precisely twenty minutes. After that, repentance will be too late.'

Eugène was in despair, for it was quite clear that Adeline must be given up—Adeline, whose myriad charms and graces rose upon his imagination in tenfold greater lustre than before, now that he was about to lose her for ever! But there was plainly no help for it; and after a brief, agitated consultation, the young men left the office to join Madame and Mademoiselle le Blanc at the Widow Carson's, in the Grande Rue, or Rue de Paris, as the only decent street in Havre-de-Grâce was at that time indifferently named, both for the purpose of communicating the untoward state of affairs, and that Eugène might take a lingering, last farewell of Adeline.

Before accompanying them thither, it is necessary to say a few words of this Madame Carson, who is about to play a very singular part in this little drama. She was a gay, well-looking, symmetrically-shaped young widow, who kept a confectioner's shop in the said Grande Rue, and officiated as her own *dame du comptoir*. Her good-looks, coquettishly-gracious smiles, and unvarying good temper, rendered her establishment much more attractive—it was by no means a brilliant affair in itself—than it would otherwise have been. Madame Carson was, in a tacit, quiet kind of way, engaged to Edouard le Blanc—that is to say, she intended marrying him as soon as their mutual savings should justify such a step; and provided, also, that no more eligible offer would her acceptance in the meantime. M. de

Véron himself was frequently in the habit of calling, on his way to or from Mon Séjour, for a pâté and a little lively badinage with the comely widow; and so frequently, at one time, that Edouard le Blanc was half-inclined—to Madame Carson's infinite amusement—to be jealous of the rich, though elderly merchant's formal and elaborate courtesies. It was on leaving her shop that he had slipped and sprained his ankle. M. de Véron fainted with the extreme pain, was carried in that state into the little parlour behind the shop, and had not yet recovered consciousness when the apothecary, whom Madame Carson had despatched her little waiting-maid-of-all-work in quest of, entered to tender his assistance. This is all, I think, that needs be said, in a preliminary way, of Madame Carson.

Of course, the tidings brought by Eugène and Edouard very painfully affected Mademoiselle le Blanc; but being a very sensible, as well as remarkably handsome young person, she soon rallied, and insisted, quite as warmly as her mother did, that the sacrifice necessary to relieve Edouard from the peril which environed him—painful, heartbreaking as that sacrifice might be—must be submitted to without reserve or delay. In other words, that M. de Véron, junior, must consent to espouse Mademoiselle de Mérode, and forthwith inform his father that he was ready to sign the nuptial contract that moment if necessary. Poor Eugène, who was really over head and ears in love, and more so just then than ever, piteously lamented his own cruel fate, and passionately denounced the tiger-heartedness of his barbarian father; but as tears and reproaches could avail nothing in such a strait, he finally submitted to the general award, and agreed to announce his submission to M. de Véron at the church of Notre Dame, not a moment later, both ladies insisted, than five minutes past seven.

Madame Carson was not at home all this while. She had gone to church, and after devotions, called on her way back on one or two friends for a little gossip, so that it wanted only about a quarter to seven when she reappeared. Of course the lamentable story had to be told over again, with all its dismal accompaniments of tears, sighs, and plaintive ejaculations; and it was curious to observe, as the narrative proceeded, how the widow's charming eyes flashed and sparkled, and her cheeks glowed with indignation, till she looked, to use Edouard le Blanc's expression, 'ferociously' handsome. 'Le monstre!' she exclaimed, as Eugène terminated the sad history, gathering up as she spoke the shawl and gloves she had just before put off; 'but I shall see him at once: I have influence with this Monsieur de Véron.'

'Nonsense, Emilie,' said Madame le Blanc. 'You possess influence over Monsieur de Véron!'

'Certainly I do. And is that such a miracle?' replied Madame Carson with a demure glance at Edouard le Blanc. Edouard looked somewhat scared, but managed to say: 'Not at all, certainly not; but this man's heart is iron—steel.'

'We shall see,' said the fair widow, as she finished drawing on her gloves. '*La grande passion* is sometimes stronger than iron or steel: is it not Monsieur Eugène? At all events, I shall try. He is in the church, you say. Very well, if I fail—but I am sure I shall not fail—I return in ten minutes, and that will leave Mademoiselle Adeline's despairing lover plenty of time to make his submission, if better may not be; and so *au revoir*, Mesdames et Messieurs.'

'What can she mean?' said Madame le Blanc as the door closed. 'I have noticed, once or twice during the last fortnight, that she has made use of strange half-hints relative to Monsieur de Véron.'

'I don't know what she can mean,' said Edouard le Blanc, seizing his hat and hurrying off; 'but I shall follow, and strive to ascertain.'

He was just in time to catch a glimpse of Madame Carson's skirts as they whisked round the corner of

the Rue St Jacques, and by quickening his speed, he saw her enter the church from that street. Notre Dame was crowded; but Edouard le Blanc had no difficulty in singling out M. de Véron, who was sitting in his accustomed chair, somewhat removed from the mass of worshippers, on the left of the high altar; and presently he discerned Madame Carson gently and adroitly making her way through the crowd towards him. The instant she was near enough, she tapped him slightly on the shoulder. He turned quickly, and stared with a haughty, questioning glance at the smiling confectioner. There was no *grande passion* in that look, Edouard felt quite satisfied, and Madame Carson's conduct seemed more than ever unintelligible. She appeared to say something, which was replied to by an impatient gesture of refusal, and M. de Véron turned again towards the altar. Madame Carson next approached close to his chair, and bending down, whispered in his ear, for perhaps a minute. As she did so, M. de Véron's body rose slowly up, involuntarily as it were, and stiffened into rigidity, as if under the influence of some frightful spell. Forcing himself at last, it seemed, to confront the whisperer, he no sooner caught her eye than he reeled, like one struck by a heavy blow, against the pedestal of a saint, whose stony features looked less white and bloodless than his own. Madame Carson contemplated the effect she had produced with a kind of pride for a few moments, and then, with a slight but peremptory wave of her hand, motioned him to follow her out of the sacred edifice. M. de Véron hastily, though with staggering steps, obeyed; Edouard le Blanc crossing the church and reaching the street just soon enough to see them both driven off in M. de Véron's carriage.

Edouard hurried back to the Grande Rue to report what he had witnessed; and what could be the interpretation of the inexplicable scene, engrossed the inventive faculties of all there, till they were thoroughly tired of their wild and aimless guesses. Eight o'clock chimed—nine—ten—and they were all, Edouard especially, working themselves into a complete panic of undefinable apprehension, when, to their great relief, M. de Véron's carriage drew up before the door. The first person to alight was M. Bourdon, a notary of eminence; next M. de Véron, who handed out Madame Carson; and all three walked through the shop into the back-apartment. The notary wore his usual business aspect, and had in his hands two rolls of thickly-written parchment, which he placed upon the table, and at once began to spread out. M. de Véron had the air of a man walking in a dream, and subdued, mastered by some overpowering, nameless terror; while Madame Carson, though pale with excitement, was evidently highly elated, and to use a French phrase, completely 'mistress of the situation.' She was the first to break silence.

'Monsieur de Véron has been kind enough, Edouard, to explain, in the presence of Monsieur Bourdon, the mistake in the accounts he was disposed to charge you with to-day. He quite remembers, now, having received two thousand francs from you, for which, in his hurry at the time, he gave you no voucher. Is not that so, Monsieur de Véron?' she added, again fixing on the merchant the same menacing look that Le Blanc had noticed in the church.

'Yes, yes,' was the quick reply of M. de Véron, who vainly attempted to look the astounded clerk in the face. 'The mistake was mine. Your accounts are quite correct, Monsieur le Blanc; and—and I shall be glad, of course, to see you at the office as usual.'

'That is well,' said Madame Carson; 'and now, Monsieur Bourdon, to business, if you please. Those documents will not take so long to read as they did to write.'

The notary smiled, and immediately began reading a marriage-contract between Eugène de Véron and

Adeline le Blanc, by which it appeared that the union of those young persons was joyfully acceded to by Jean Baptiste de Véron and Marie le Blanc, their parents—the said Jean Baptiste de Véron binding himself formally to endow the bride and bridegroom jointly, on the day of marriage, with the sum of 300,000 francs, and, moreover, to admit his son as a partner in the business, thenceforth to be carried on under the name of De Véron & Son.

This contract was written in duplicate, and as soon as the notary had finished reading, Madame Carson handed a pen to M. de Véron, saying in the same light, coquettish, but peremptory tone as before: 'Now, Monsieur, quick, if you please: yours is the most important signature.' The merchant signed and sealed both parchments, and the other interested parties did the same, in silent, dumb bewilderment, broken only by the scratching of the pens and the legal words repeated after the notary. 'We need not detain you longer, Messieurs, I believe,' said Madame Carson. 'Bon soir, Monsieur de Véron,' she added, extending an ungloved hand to that gentleman, who faintly touched it with his lips; 'you will hear from me to-morrow.'

'What is the meaning of all this?' exclaimed Eugène de Véron, the instant his father and the notary disappeared. 'I positively feel as if standing upon my head!' A chorus of like interrogatories from the Le Blancs assailed Madame Carson, whose ringing bursts of mirth mocked for a time their impatience.

'Meaning, *parbleu!*' she at last replied, after pausing to catch breath. 'That is plain enough, surely. Did you not all see with what *empressment* the poor man kissed my hand? There, don't look so wretched, Edouard,' she added with a renewed outburst; 'perhaps I may have the caprice to prefer you after all to an elderly millionaire—who knows? But come, let us try to be a little calm and sensible. What I have done, good folks, I can as easily undo; and that being the case, Monsieur Eugène must sign me a bond to-morrow morning for fifty thousand francs, payable three days after his marriage. Is it agreed? Very well: then I keep these two parchments till the said bond is executed; and now, my friends, good-night, for I, as you may believe, am completely tired after all this benevolent fairy-work.'

The wedding took place on the next day but one, to the great astonishment of every one acquainted with the two families. It was also positively rumoured that M. de Véron had proposed marriage to Madame Carson, and been refused! Be this true or not, it was soon apparent that, from some cause or other, M. de Véron's health and spirits were irretrievably broken down, and after lingering out a moribund, secluded life of scarcely a twelvemonth's duration, that gentleman died suddenly at Mon Séjour. A clause in his will bequeathed 20,000 francs to Madame Carson, with an intimated hope, that it would be accepted as a pledge by that lady to respect, as she hitherto had done, the honour of an ancient family.

This pledge to secrecy would no doubt have been kept, but that rumours of poisoning and suicide, in connection with De Véron's death, having got abroad, the Procureur-Général ordered an investigation to take place. The suspicion proved groundless; but the *precis-verbal* set forth, that on examining the body of the deceased, there were discovered the letters 'I. de B.,' 'T. F.,' branded on the front of the left shoulder; the two last, initials of '*Tyranne Forcé*' (forced labour), being large and very distinct. There could be no doubt, therefore, that the proud M. de Véron was an escaped *forçat*; and subsequent investigation, which was not, however, very strongly pressed, sufficiently proved that Jean Baptiste de Véron, the younger son of a high family, had in very early youth been addicted to wild courses; that he had gone to the colonies under a feigned name, to escape difficulties at

home; and whilst at the Isle de Bourbon, had been convicted of premeditated homicide at a gaming-house, and sentenced to perpetual imprisonment with hard labour. Contriving to escape, he had returned to France, and by the aid of a considerable legacy, commenced a prosperous mercantile career; how terminated, we have just seen. It was by pure accident, or what passes for such in the world, that Madame Carson had arrived at a knowledge of the terrible secret. When M. de Véron, after spraining his ankle, was carried in a state of insensibility into the room behind her shop, she had immediately busied herself in removing his neckcloth, unfastening his shirt, then a flannel one which fitted tightly round the neck, and thus obtained a glimpse of the branded letters 'T. F.' With her customary quickness of wit, she instantly replaced the shirts, neckcloth, &c., and carefully concealed the fatal knowledge she had acquired, till an opportunity of using it advantageously should present itself.

The foregoing are, I believe, all the reliable particulars known of a story of which there used to be half-a-hundred different versions flying about Le Havre. Edouard le Blanc married Madame Carson, and subsequently became a partner of Eugène de Véron. It was not long, however, before the business was removed to another and distant French seaport, where, for aught I know to the contrary, the firm of 'De Véron and Le Blanc' flourishes to this day.

BETTING-OFFICES.

'BETTING-SHOP' is vulgar, and we dislike vulgarity. 'Commission Office,' 'Racing Bank,' 'Mr Hoppoite Green's Office,' 'Betting-Office,' are the styles of announcement adopted by speculators who open what low people call Betting-shops. The chosen designation is usually painted in gold letter on a chocolate-coloured wire-gauze blind, impervious to the view. A betting-office may display on its small show-board two bronzed plaster horses, rampant, held by two Ethiopian figures, nude; or it may prefer making a show of cigars. Many offices have risen out of simple cigar-shops. When this is the case, the tobacco business gives way, the slow trade and fast profession not running well together. An official appearance is always considered necessary. A partition, therefore, sufficiently high not to be peered over, runs midway across the shop, surmounted with a rail. By such means, visions are suggested to the intelligent mind of desks, clerks, and, if the beholder has sufficient imagination, of bankers' clerks. In the partition is an enlarged pigeon-hole—not far off, may be supposed to lurk the hawk—through which are received shillings, half-crowns; in fact, any kind of coin or notes, no sum appearing inadmissible. The office is papered with a warm crimson paper, to make it snug and comfortable, pleasant as a lounge, and casting a genial glow upon the proceedings.

But the betting-lists are the attraction—these are the dice of the betting-man: a section of one of the side-walls within the office is devoted to them. They consist of long strips of paper—each race having its own slip—on which are stated the odds against the horses. Hasty and anxious are the glances which the speculator casts at the betting-lists: he there sees which are the favourites; whether those he has backed are advancing or retrograding; and he endeavours to discover, by signs and testimonies, by all kinds of movements and dodges, the knowing one's opinion. He will drop fishing words to other gazers, will try to overhear whispered remarks, will sidle towards any jockey-legged or ecurial-costumed individual, and aim more especially at getting into the good graces of the betting-office keeper, who, when his business is slack, comes forth from behind the partition and from

the duties of the pigeon-hole, to stretch his legs and hold turf-converse. The betting-office keeper is the speculator's divinity.

The office itself is but the point where the ringing of the metal takes place, where the actual business is more bindingly entered into; but on great, or, as they are technically termed, grand days, there will occur—what will also apply, perhaps, occasionally to grand operas—very heavy operations. Large numbers of the speculators will collect, forming themselves into knots and groups on the pavement, and even in the roadway contiguous to the office. Here they appear a motley congregation, a curious agglomeration of seediness. Seediness is the prominent feature of the betting mass, as they are on such occasions collected—seediness of dress and of character. Yet amongst the groups are some better-looking kine, some who seem to fatten, and who costume themselves in fully-napped cloth, and boast of ostentatious pockets, and hats which advertise the owner as knowing a thing or two. These may be touters to the office: some may be victims, who have once won a stake. The latter now neglect their ordinary calling, and pass the whole of their time in the purlieus of betting-shops. As for the touters—betting-offices are not progressive without the aid of touters—they are gentlemen who have in their time worn many kinds of character, who have always existed one way or another on the very outskirts of honesty, till some fine morning a careless step brings them from that neutral ground into the domain of the law, where they are laid hold of. They do not disdain their adopted calling; they are not above assisting errand-boys to go in for large stakes; they tempt apothecaries' apprentices by prospects of being able to come out. They know likewise the best horses, and which are sure to win.

But there are numbers of willing, untutored betting-men, who go in of their own accord—'quite promiscuous.' They belong to the class of petty tradesmen, and perhaps there are steady workmen and comfortably income'd clerks among them; although it is the tradesmen who are most numerous, and who give colour to the whole body. There is Macwait, the cheap baker, he contributes his quota weekly to the betting-shop: he has a strong desire to touch a twenty-pound stake. Whetcoles, the potato salesman, has given up a lucrative addition to his regular business—the purveying of oysters—for the sake of having more time to attend the office. Nimblecut, the hairdresser, has been endeavouring to raise his charge for shaving one half-penny per chin, to be enabled to speculate more largely. Shavings, journeyman carpenter, calculates upon clearing considerably more by 'Sister to Swindler' than a year's interest from the savings-bank. There are thousands of similarly circumstanced speculators: they make a daily, if not more frequent promenade to the betting-office; and on the days when the races come off, they may be observed in shoals, nodding and winking knowingly as they pass one another. Some are seen with jocular countenances, and pass for pleasant fellows: they are impressed with the idea that their horses are looking up. In others, the jocular expression has passed away, and the philosophical observer sets them down as melancholy individuals, given to castigating their wives, and verging dogwards.

Betting-men—those who take a pride in their profession—assume generally a looseness of style: there may be an appropriateness in this, considering the mercurial contents of their pockets. In walking, a freedom of gait, approaching the swagger, is generally adopted; cigar-smoking at the office door is considered respectable; hands may be inserted *ad libitum* in pockets, and a primary coloured kerchief worn mildly. The individual is usually seen by the observant public making up his book. But the

evidence of shrewdness consists in familiarity with the technicalities of turf-lore; without this, costume is of no use. The better must be well up to the jockeys' names, and those of the horses—of the races they have run—of Day's stable—of Scott's ditto—must know when the cup or 2000-guinea stakes are run for. His vocabulary comprises such words as outsiders, winners, two-year old, lame ducks, and bad books. He sometimes talks loudly, although, for the most part, he delights in a close, earnest, confidential, suppressed tone. There is nothing a better prides himself on more than being in the possession of some, to the common herd, unattainable secret—something only to be obtained once in a lifetime, and then only after severe losses—a secret brought out by some train of fortuitous and most intricately-woven events. It comes through a line of ingenious, quickwitted, up-to-everything communicators, and is made known proximately to the fortunate possessor by a diplomatic potman, who waits in a room frequented by a groom, who pumped it out of a stable-boy, who—It is not improbable that the information has somewhat deteriorated in its journeyings through mews and along dung-heaps: it is possible, when it comes to be made use of, it may be found very expensive in its application.

The turf speculator must possess a frank and willing imagination: he must calculate upon his account at the betting-shop, as he would upon so much being to his credit at a banker's; he must consider the office cheques with which his pocket-book is overflowing, as at par with bank-notes; he need keep but little gold and silver, as it is far better to know that it is producing a highly-profitable percentage. Should he be visited by any momentary fits of depression, he may draw forth his portfolio, and gratify his eyes with the contemplation of certificates for fives, and twenties, and fifties.

We must not pass over a class of speculators who bet, and yet who are not true betting-men: they do not wish to be seen in betting-shops, yet cannot keep away. They are not loungers, for they may be observed passing along the thoroughfare seemingly with all desirable intentness upon their daily business; but they suddenly disappear as they arrive at the door of the betting-shop. These are your respectable men; worthy, solid, family men. But it is not easy to enter a betting-shop, and avoid rubbing against some clinging matter. Betting-men generally are not nice in their sensibilities; and perhaps on a fine Sunday morning, proceeding with his family to the parish church, our Pharisee may receive a tip from some unshaven, strong-countenanced *sans culotte*, which may cause his nerves to tingle for the rest of the day.

But there is also a light, flimsy, fly-away-kind of speculator, a May-day betting-man—a youth fresh, perhaps, from school and the country, with whom his friends have hardly yet made up their minds what to do—who is at present seeing as much as he can see of town, upon what he finds decidedly small means. He has an ambition to appear fast; has of course a great admiration for fast people; but is at present young and fresh-coloured, and cannot, with all his endeavours, make himself appear less innocent and good-natured than he is. He has strained his purse in a bet, has betted on a winning horse, and has won five pounds. This would perhaps have fixed him for life as a speculator; but the money burns in his pocket. Before he can make up his mind to lay out his winnings on fresh bets, he must have a Hansom for the day. He decorates himself in his light-coloured paletot, blue neck-tie, and last dickey—drives to Regent Street to purchase cigars—to an oyster-shop redolent of saw-dust and lobsters—rigs a very light pair of kids—drives to, and alarms by his fast appearance, a few of his friends, who forthwith write off long woolly letters to relations in the country. He is accordingly

cited to appear at home, where he becomes a respected local junior clerk in a Welsh mining company.

There are various kinds of betting-offices. Some are speculative, May-fly offices, open to-day and shut to-morrow—offices that will bet any way, and against anything—that will accommodate themselves to any odds—receive any sum they can get, small or large; and should a misfortune occur, such as the wrong horse winning, forget to open next day. These are but second-rate offices. The money-making, prosperous betting-office is quite a different thing. It is not advisable for concerns which intend making thousands in a few years, to pay the superintendents liberally, and to keep well-clothed touters—to conduct themselves, in short, like speculative offices. They must not depend entirely upon chance. Chance is very well for betting-men, but will not do for the respectable betting-office keepers, who are the stakeholders.

The plan adopted is a very simple one, but ingenious in its simplicity. The betting-office takes a great dislike in its own mind to a particular horse, the favourite of the betting-men. It makes bets against that horse, which amount in the aggregate to a fortune; and then it *buys* the object of its frantic dislike. This being effected, the horse of course loses, and the office wins. How could it be otherwise? Would you have a horse win against its owner's interest? The thing being settled, the office, in order to ascertain the amount of its winnings, has only to deduct the price of the horse from its aggregate bets, and arrange the remainder in a line of perhaps five figures. Whereupon the betting-men grow seedier and more seedy; some of the more mercurial go off in a fit of apoplectic amazement; some betake themselves to Waterloo Stairs on a moonless night; some proceed to the Diggings, some to St Luke's, and some to the dogs; some become so unsteady, that they sign the wrong name to a draft, or enter the wrong house at night, or are detected in a crowd with their hand in the wrong man's pocket. But by degrees everything comes right again. The insane are shut up—the desperate transported—the dead buried—the deserted families carted to the work-house; and the betting-office goes on as before.

A MAY FLOWER-SHOW AT CHISWICK.

It is one o'clock P.M.; I am at Hyde-Park Corner; I hail the nearest 'Hansom,' and am quickly dashing away for Chiswick. The road leading thither is always a scene of great bustle: on a Chiswick fête-day, this is very much augmented. But I am early, and the increase of vehicles is not yet great. A few carriages and cabs, mostly filled with ladies, who, like myself, are early on the road, and eager to be at the scene of action, are occasionally passed; for my horse is a good one, and the driver seems to desire to do the journey in good style. The majority of passengers and conveyances are chiefly of the everyday character, and such as are always met with on this great thoroughfare. Omnibuses, with loads of dusty passengers; carts and wagons, filled with manure, and each with a man or boy dozing upon the top; teams baiting at the roadside inns; troops of dirty children at the ends of narrow streets; with carriers' carts, and travel-stained pedestrians, make up the aggregate of the objects on the road. But in another hour the scene will change; the aristocratic 'turn-out,' with its brilliant appointments and spruce footmen—the cab, the brougham, and the open chariot, all filled with gaily-dressed company, will crowd the way; for a Chiswick fête is one of the events of a London season. People go there as they do to the Opera—to see and to be seen. As I journey onward, I catch glimpses of blooming fruit-trees, and green hedges, speaking of the approach of summer. The little patches of garden by the wayside are gay with flowers, but sadly disfigured with dust. Even they, however,

look quite refreshing in contrast with the close and crowded streets I have left behind. The spire of the church on Chiswick green is peeping above the houses in the distance; and by the time I have noticed the increase of bustle on the road, and about the inn-doors, the cab has stopped at one of the garden entrances. Early as I am, many others are before me, and are waiting for the hour of admission—two o'clock. The carriages of those already arrived are drawn up in rank upon the green; policemen are everywhere to preserve order; ostlers are numerous, with buckets of water and bundles of hay; groups of loungers are looking on, carriages are every minute arriving, and the bustle is becoming great. As it yet wants ten minutes to two o'clock, I shall occupy the time by giving the reader a little introduction to what we are presently to see.

There are three of these fêtes every year—one in May, another in June, and a third in July. When the weather is fine, there is always a brilliant gathering of rank and beauty, and fashion; but the June show is usually the best attended. English gardening is always well represented here. The plants and fruit brought for exhibition astonish even those who are best acquainted with what English gardeners can do. For several seasons past, it was thought that cultivation had reached its highest point; yet each succeeding year outvied the past, and report tells me, that the plants exhibited to-day are in advance of anything previously seen. They are sent here from widely distant parts of the country—many of them are brought one or two hundred miles; but most of the large collections are from gardens at a comparatively short distance from Chiswick. The principal prize is contended for by collections of thirty stove and greenhouse plants; and their large size will be apparent, when it is stated that one such collection makes eight or ten vanloads. There are never more than three or four competitors for this prize. Their productions are generally brought into the garden on the evening previous to the day of exhibition. At about daylight on the morning of the fête, the great bustle of preparation begins. Everything has to be arranged, and ready for the judges by ten o'clock A.M., at which hour all exhibitors, and others interested in the awards, are obliged to leave the gardens; and they are not readmitted until the gates are thrown open to those who may have tickets of admission, at two o'clock.

At last they are open. (How expectation clogs the wheels of time!) I join the throng; and in a few minutes I am among the flowers, which are arranged in long tents, on stages covered with green baize, as a background to set off in bold relief their beautiful forms and tints. There are three military bands stationed in different parts of the grounds, to keep up a succession of enlivening strains until six o'clock, the hour when the proceedings, so far as the public are concerned, are supposed to terminate. One of them is already 'discoursing most eloquent music.' Company rapidly arrives; well-dressed persons are strolling through the tents, sitting beneath the trees, or on the benches, listening to the music. The scene is a gay one. The richness and beauty of the masses of flower, rivalled only by the gay dresses and bright eyes of hundreds of fair admirers; the delicate green of the trees clothed with their young foliage, and the carpet-like lawns, all lit up by a bright May sun, and enlivened by the best music, combine to form a whole, the impression of which is not easily forgotten.

But I am forgetting the flowers. Suppose we enter the nearest tent, and note the more prominent objects on our way. Here is a somewhat miscellaneous assortment; geraniums are conspicuous. The plants are remarkably fine, averaging nearly a yard across, and presenting masses of flower in the highest perfection. One is conspicuous for the richness of its colouring; its name is magnet (*Hoyle*). There is a collection of ferns,

too; their graceful foliage, agitated by every breeze, adds much to the interest of this tent. Among the most remarkable are the maidenhair-ferns (*adiantum*), and a huge plant of the elk's horn fern, from New South Wales. It derives its name from the shape of its large fronds. Before us is a quantity of Chinese hydrangeas, remarkable in this case for the small size of the plants, and disproportionately large heads of pink blossoms. Cape pelargoniums, too, are well represented: they are curious plants, indigenous to the Cape of Good Hope; specimens of them are very often sent to this country, with boxes of bulbs, for which the Cape is famous. When they arrive, they look like pieces of deadwood; but when properly cared for, they rapidly make roots and branches, and produce their interesting flowers in abundance.

Passing to the next tent, we enter that part devoted to the fruit. A delicate aroma pervades the place. Directly before us is a large plant of the Chinese loquah, loaded with fruit. This is yellow, and about the size of a small plum. The plant is a great novelty; for although hardly enough to be grown out of doors in this country, it produces its fruit only in a hothouse. Associated with it are some large vines in pots, with a profusion of fine bunches of grapes. Then there are dishes of strawberries (*British Queens*), numerous pine-apples, cherries, peaches, bananas (grown in this country), melons, &c.; besides some very fine winter apples and pears, which have been admirably preserved. Of the former, the winter-queen, old green nonpareil, and golden harvey are conspicuous; of the latter, the warden and Uvedale's St Germain are fine.

The most attractive feature of these shows appears to be the orchideous or air-plants, as they are popularly known. A greater number of persons are always collected round them than in any other part of the tents; nor is this to be wondered at. Nothing can be more singular in appearance or gorgeous in colouring. Their fragrance, too, is so delightful. Description can convey but a faint idea of their great beauty and diversity of character. They seem to mimic the insect world in the shapes of their blossoms; nor are the resemblances distant. Every one has heard of the butterfly-plant: there is one on the stage now before us, and as the breeze gently waves its slender stalks, each tipped with a vegetable butterfly, it becomes almost difficult to imagine that we are not watching the movements of a real insect flitting among the plants. Here is a spike of *Gongora maculata*, bearing no faint resemblance to a quantity of brown insects with expanded wings collected round the stem. Close to it are some *Brassias*, mimicking with equal fidelity insects of a paler colour, besides hundreds of others equally curious and beautiful. Some bear their flowers in erect spikes, or loose heads; others have drooping racemes a yard in length, as some of the *dendrobiums*. More have a slender flower-stalk making a graceful curve, with the flowers placed on the uppermost side, as *Phalanopsis amabilis*, which bears a profusion of white blossoms closely resembling large moths with expanded wings. Here are some remarkable plants we must not pass without noticing: they are equally attractive both by their beauty and associations. They are two plants of *Stanhopea tigrina*, exhibited by Her Majesty, and a fine specimen of *Acineta Humboldtii*, named in honour of the philosophic traveller. They are all worthy of the associations they call up; they grow in open baskets, and the flowers are produced from below, directly opposite the leaves. The ordinary law of flowering-plants is reversed in them.

We pass on: everywhere gorgeous masses of flower are before us. Huge plants of Indian azaleas, filling a space of several feet, literally covered with blossoms of every hue. Heaths from the Cape, far outtravelling their brethren in their native wilds; rhododendrons

from the Himalaya; and cactuses from the plains of South America. In fact, here are collected examples of the flora of almost every known country of the globe. But we must not be carried away by these more showy plants to the exclusion of some very curious and interesting little things which I see we are in danger of forgetting. Here, carefully covered by a bell-glass, is a fine specimen of *Dionaea muscipula*, or Venus's fly-trap. Every reader of natural history is familiar with its economy; but one does not often get a sight of it. By the side of it are many other curious plants, covered with equal care. *Anectochilus argenteus*, a little dwarf plant, with leaves which, both in their beautiful lustre and peculiar markings, resemble a green lizard, must serve for an example. Among other curiosities, is a small plant of one of the species of rhododendrons, recently introduced by Dr Hooker from the mountains of Sikkim Himalaya; close to it are some azaleas imported from the northern parts of the Celestial Empire. There are also some very rare and valuable specimens of hardy trees, from the mountains of Patagonia. They belong to the very extensive family of coniferous plants, and have been named respectively *Fitz-Roya Patagonica* and *Saxe-Gotha conspicua*. There is also a remarkably handsome creeper, *Hexacentrus mysorensis*, having pendent racemes of large flowers in shape resembling the snap-dragon, and of a rich orange and chocolate colour.

To revert to the little Sikkim rhododendron, I shall give here the description of a still more diminutive specimen, met with by Dr Hooker during his journey, and which he has figured and described in his beautiful work, *The Rhododendron of Sikkim-Himalaya*. It is called *R. nivale*, or snow-rhododendron. 'The hard, woody branches of this curious little species, as thick as a goose-quill, struggle along the ground for a foot or two, presenting brown tufts of vegetation where not half-a-dozen other plants can exist. The branches are densely interwoven, very harsh and woody, wholly depressed; whence the shrub, spreading horizontally, and barely raised two inches above the soil, becomes eminently typical of the arid, stern climate it inhabits. The latest to bloom, and earliest to mature its seeds, by far the smallest in foliage, and proportionally largest in flower, most lepidote in vesture, humble in stature, rigid in texture, deformed in habit, yet the most odoriferous, it may be recognised, even in the herbarium, as the production of the loftiest elevation on the surface of the globe—of the most excessive climate—of the joint influences of a scorching sun by day, and the keenest frost by night—of the greatest drought, followed in a few hours by a saturated atmosphere—of the balmy calm, alternating with the whirlwind of the Alps. For eight months of the year, it is buried under many feet of snow; for the remaining four, it is frequently snowed on and sunned in the same hour. During genial weather, when the sun heats the soil to 150 degrees, its perfumed foliage scents the air; whilst to snow-storm and frost it is insensible: blooming through all; expanding its little purple flowers to the day, and only closing them to wither after fertilisation has taken place. As the life of a moth may be indefinitely prolonged whilst its duties are unfulfilled, so the flower of this little mountaineer will remain open through days of fog and sleet, till a mild day facilitates the detachment of the pollen and the fecundation of the ovary. This process is almost wholly the effect of winds; for though humblebees, and the "Blues" and "Fritillaries" (*Polyommatus* and *Argynnis*) amongst butterflies, do exist at this prodigious elevation, they are too few in number to influence the operations of vegetable life.' To this Dr Hooker adds: 'This singular little plant attains a loftier elevation, I believe, than any other shrub in the world.'

But here is a plant, or rather flower, more curious than any we have seen. The corolla is on a long

stalk, a foot or more high; but how to describe it is the difficulty. Imagine a bat with expanded wings, with the addition of a tail, spread out before you, having on its breast a rosette of narrow ribbon, of the same dusky colour, and you will gain some idea of its form and colour. Its botanical name is *Attacia cristata*.

Here is the rose-tent. In no previous season have the plants appeared in finer condition. A few years ago, nobody could grow roses fit to be seen in pots; many said it was impossible to do so: now, one can scarcely imagine anything finer than they are seen at the metropolitan flower-shows. Both in healthy appearance, and in fineness of flower, they exceed those which we admire so much in the open garden in summer. One or two are conspicuous, though all are beautiful. *Souvenirs d'un ami* has pale flesh-coloured flowers, exceedingly delicate; nor is the perfume they emit less attractive. *Niphetus*, pure white; *Adam*, very pale; and *Géant des Batailles*, of the richest crimson, are among the most attractive; but there are numerous others, rivaling them in beauty and fragrance.

As the afternoon wears away, the more fashionable visitors depart. At six o'clock, the several bands of music form one, the National Anthem is played, and the fête is over.

GOLD-SEEKING AT HOME.

THE Lomond Hills, in the shires of Fife and Kinross, were known in ancient times as the hunting-grounds of the kings of Scotland, when these monarchs resided in their summer-palace at Falkland, a village on their north-eastern declivity. At a period intermediate between these and the present times, they were the haunt of the persecuted Covenanters, and often resounded with the voice of psalms raised at conventicles. Since then, their solitude and silence have seldom been disturbed, save by the bark of the shepherd's dog, or the echoes caused by the blasting of rocks in the limestone quarries which run along their southern and western ridges. But during the month of May last, this solitude and silence were completely destroyed, by thousands of persons plying every kind of instrument upon them, from the ponderous crowbar and pickaxe, to the easily-wielded trowel and hammer, in search of gold, which they believed to be hidden in their recesses. The information on which they acted seemed to them to come from an authentic source, and to be confirmed by competent authority.

On the southern base of the hills, overlooking the far-famed Lochleven, lies the village of Kinnesswood, noted as the birthplace of the poet Michael Bruce. A native of this village entered the army, and there learned manners at war with good morals, which, after his discharge, brought upon him the vengeance of the law, and he was banished 'beyond seas.' His subsequent good-conduct, however, procured him 'a ticket-of-leave,' and he became servant to the commissariat for the convicts in Van Diemen's Land. In this capacity he had frequent opportunities of seeing the substance brought from the Bathurst 'diggings,' containing the gold which is now arriving in this country in such large quantities. It at once struck him that he had seen abundance of the same material in his native hills, when visiting the quarries in which several of his friends and acquaintances earned their livelihood. This impression he conveyed in a letter to his mother, who, as a matter of course, afforded the information to all to whom she had an opportunity of communicating it. The intelligence spread with the rapidity of an electric telegraph; and an excitement was produced such as is seen among

bees when their hive has received a sudden shock. The mountain pathways became immediately alive with human beings, and noises arose like the hum of a city heard at a distance during the busiest hours of the day. In the villages immediately adjoining the place of resort, the excitement was wholly confined to youngsters and idlers, who are ever ready to seize upon novelty and enter upon bustle; but further off, it extended to old and young, hale and infirm, asthmatic and long-winded, grave and gay, taught and untaught, respectable and disreputable, industrious and idle, till it reached a compass of twenty miles at least, extending not only to the Forth and Tay, but stretching inland from their opposite shores. In short, men who had never climbed a mountain all their lives before, though living in close proximity to one, were seen on its loftiest peaks, and toiling there with all the ardour of Cyclops.

Meanwhile, some of the less impulsive minds in the district, not altogether untouched by the prevailing mania, began to cast about for warrants to justify their appropriation of some of this much-coveted material, and assure their confidence that it was really gold. Memory, research, tradition, testimony, all came to their help. They recollected how their fathers had told them that the Laird of Lathrisk had wrought a lead-mine on the northern declivity of the East Law, which yielded also a considerable proportion of silver, and which was abandoned only because of the high tax government had put upon the latter metal. Then came the ready query: 'That since there is silver in these hills, why not also gold, seeing they frequently go together?' Then it was found that the mineral formations in which this metal occurs are the crystalline primitive rocks; and with these the Lomond Hills were held to correspond. Then it had been told them, that in days of yore shepherds had found pieces of gold while tending their flocks on the hills, and that gold had been frequently met with in the whole district of country between the Forth and the Tay. Last of all came the testimony of a man who had returned to the neighbourhood from California, and who assured them, that the substance they submitted to his inspection was in all respects similar to that which was dug out of the hills in the gold regions of America. Singularly enough, though they did not reflect upon the facts, this man had returned home as poor as he had departed, and manifested no desire to accompany them to the new El Dorado at their doors. Other persons were meanwhile pushing inquiries in a more certain direction, and subjecting the supposed precious treasure to infallible tests.

The chief centre of attraction is a partially-wrought limestone quarry, known by the name of the Sheet-biehead, right above the village of Kinnesswood, and about a gunshot back from the brow of the Bishop Hill. It is surrounded on all sides by immense heaps of debris, which has been repeatedly dug into during the last thirty years by geologizing students, in search of fossils connected with the carboniferous system, and who must have frequently met with the substance which has caused all this excitement, but never imagined it to be gold. The face of the quarry, to the depth of twenty feet from the top, is an accumulation of shale or slate, lying in regular layers, and easily broken. It has been turned to good account of late in the manufacture of slate-pencils of superior quality. Among this shaly accumulation, there are frequent layers of a soft, wet clay or ochre; and it is in this that the brilliants which have dazzled the imagination of so many are chiefly found, and which, accordingly, are frequently thrown out among the debris, of which it comes to form a part. In this quarry, then, and in the heaps around it, hundreds are earnestly busy in laying bare what is beneath; while scores of men, women, and children are silently and earnestly looking on.

One has just brought out a ball of stone, or something like stone, about the size of a man's hand, known among the quarrymen as 'a fairy ball'; it is composed of a hard crust, like rusted iron, which, on being broken, is found to contain a yellow shining metal of various shapes and sizes—grains, octohedrons, cubes, and their allied forms, as is the case with gold; and what else can it be but the precious metal, thinks the finder, as he places it in his receptacle, and applies himself anew to his vocation. In a little while he stumbles on another of these balls, as big as a man's hat, which he breaks, and opens with increasing eagerness; when, lo! it is as empty as a 'deaf nut'—the water which percolated through the shale having rusted the iron that goes to form the crust along with the ochre, but failed, as in the previous case, to form crystals in the interior. A third, fourth, and fifth are found to be as hollow as the last, and the 'digger' begins to look a little crestfallen, and abate his eagerness.

But here is an Irishman, who has been vastly more lucky, dancing a jig, with a footless stocking near him, tied at each end, packed as full as it can hold of 'the fine stuff,' as he calls it, while with wonderful agility he flourishes a heavy pickaxe and spade over his head, and screams at the highest pitch of his voice: 'Sure, now, and isn't my fortune made!' By and by, getting at once hoarse and tired, he desists from his exertions, and entreats a boy near him 'to go into the bog beyond there, and get him some pooten, which he is sure is making in the stills among the turf'; offering him at the same time a lump of his 'treasure' as payment for his trouble.

Here is a tall, grave, shrewd-looking man, very like an elder of the kirk, throwing away part of his accumulation, but somewhat stealthily retaining a portion in the large cotton handkerchief in which he had placed it, while a respectable-looking woman is saying to him: 'John, the minister says, it's no gold, but only brimstone.' To which he answers, with an audible sigh: 'Well hath the wise man said, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.' Here is a strong-built but lumpish-looking fellow, seemingly a ploughman or day-labourer, leaving the scene of action in evident disgust, who, on being asked if he had been successful, answers roughly: 'No!' and adds: 'I'll sell you this pick for a glass of ale or a dram of whisky.' Here are angry words passing between a middle-aged man and a youth, respecting the right of possession, the former having driven the latter away from a promising-looking place on which he was employed, and commenced operations upon it himself.

It is Saturday; and the mills on the river Leven are stopped at noon, to allow the water in the lake from which it flows to accumulate its supplies for the following week's operations. Freed thus from labour, the spinners hasten to the scene of attraction, and largely swell the crowd already assembled there. The men begin the search with eagerness, while the women content themselves with looking on; but it is evident that they are unaccustomed to the use of the instruments they have assumed, and that long practice will be necessary before they can turn them to much account. Here are bands of colliers able to wield them to purpose, yet how unwilling they appear to be to put forth their strength. They came in the expectation of getting gold for the lifting, which is nowhere the case; and are evidently disappointed in finding that both effort and perseverance are necessary. Indeed, it surprised us to see so little disposition to make and maintain exertion on the part of those who fancied that certain riches would be the result. Notwithstanding the numerous traces of picking, hammering, and shovelling they have left behind them, there is not an excavation a foot deep; while over a crevice in the rock, three inches square, 'a digger' has left the words, scratched with a piece of slate: 'There

is no gold here,' as if he had done all that was necessary to prove it. Even in the loose debris around the quarry—with which the substance referred to abounds—there is no trace of a digging wider or deeper than a man's hat. We have seen a student make greater and longer-continued exertion to get a fossil shell, and a terrier dog to get a rat or a rabbit, than any of the gold-seekers have. Burns the poet, in his lament, entitled *Man was made to Mourn*, complains, with more pathos and sentiment than truth and justice, that the landlords will not 'give him leave to toil.' That is not the leave most men desire, but the leave to be idle. If gold were to be got for the lifting, and bread were as easily procured as water, man would not be disposed to take healthful exercise, much less labour or toil.

We shall not describe the scene as it developed itself on Sunday. It was at total variance with the reputation Scotchmen have acquired for the observance of that day, but in perfect keeping with the notoriety they have gained for their love of strong drink. Monday was the fifteenth day of the gold-fever; and, like most other fevers, it was then at its height. Parties had been on the hill soon after the previous midnight awaiting the dawn, resolved to be the first at the diggings that morning, and 'have their fortunes made before others arrived.' But the lark had not got many yards high in his heavenward ascent, and only struck the first note of his morning-carol, when the mountain concaves sent back echoes of music from a whole band of men, marching at the head of a still greater number, who might have been taken for a regiment of sappers and miners. They have come from a distance; and, like the others who have preceded them, can have known little or nothing of 'balmy sleep, kind nature's sweet restorer,' unless they have taken it at church the preceding day, or in their beds, when they should have been there. The morning has grown apace, and shews the mountain-sides and table-land teeming with life. 'The cry is still, they come;' and long before mid-day, it is calculated that there are at least 1200 persons on the hill—many of them spectators of the scene, but most of them actors in it.

To a curious observer, it was at once an amusing, interesting, instructive, and painful spectacle. It developed character; shewed to some extent the state of society among certain classes and professions; and exhibited human nature in some of its peculiar and less agreeable phases. The most striking and unlikeable manifestations were—ignorance, credulity, superstition, recklessness, and disregard for all that is 'lovely and of good report.' We were particularly struck with the want of foresight, observation, and reflection shewn by a great number of the persons concerned, and of whom other things might have been expected. They had come to 'the diggings' without instruments of any kind with which to bring forth the supposed gold from its recesses; and, more wonderful still, without food to sustain them while employed in finding it. What an easy prey these persons would have been to any one willing to take advantage of them! They willingly parted with much of their supposed treasure for a few crumbs of cake from a boy's pocket, and with still more for a slice of poor cheese from a quarryman's wallet. The man who brought intoxicating drink to them, would have received in return whatever he would have been pleased to demand. One party, and one only, so far as we could learn, was more provident than the rest, having provisions with it equal to its necessities for one day at least, among which whisky held a prominent place.

The substance found and supposed to be gold is very similar to that found in the coal-mines and iron-bands of Fife, which are known to 'crop out' in the Lomond Hills—none being found further north—yet the colliers and miners did not identify the substance when found

in other circumstances than those in which they are accustomed to meet with it. The inhabitants of the district in which it is found shewed little sympathy with the excitement produced, a fact which should have led the gold-hunters to pause and ponder; for they were as likely to know the nature of the substance sought as persons at a distance, and just as likely to appropriate it, if it really were gold. But under the influence of their credulity, our adventurers drew a conclusion quite different—namely, that the people at the foot of the hill affected indifference, in order to deceive those at a distance, and keep all the treasure to themselves. It was of no use to tell them, that this said gold had been tested half a century ago, and been 'found wanting.' They wished it to be gold, and they were determined to believe it such. Much advantage was taken of this credulity, even by those who had themselves been its dupes. The most daring falsehoods were invented by them, in order to induce others to befool themselves as they had done. One, according to his own account, had received 30s. for his 'findings'; and another had been offered £2 for as much as he had collected in half an hour. Such are specimens of the fables they devised, with a view to deceive their acquaintances, and they had manifest pleasure in seeing them produce the desired effect.

Meanwhile, every test known to or conceivable by the amateur chemists—of which there are not few in the countries in which the hills are situated—was put in requisition, and a voice evoked by them, but it would not speak as desired. Others, who knew nothing of chemistry, were torturing it in every possible way—beating it with hammers, to see if it would expand, like gold, into leaf; but instead of this, it only flew off in splinters: then putting it into the smith's forge, to see if it would liquefy and separate from the dross, but it only evaporated in fumes, which drove them from the smithy by their offensive odour. Not one of these experimenters, whether more or less skilled, thought of subjecting it to the simple and certain test of cutting it with a knife, of which the substance in question is not susceptible, whereas gold cuts like tough cheese. Enough, however, had been done to confirm suspicions which had been floating in the minds of many of the diggers, that this rapid wealth-finding was a delusion and a lie. All doubts upon the subject were finally set at rest by the professors of mineralogy in the colleges, and the practical chemists in Edinburgh and Glasgow, informing certain inquirers as to the real nature of this deceptive substance. It is of two kinds: the one with a gray, the other with a brown base—the latter much more common than the former; the one shining with a whitish, the other, with a yellowish lustre. The one is *galena*, a sulphuret of lead; the other, *pyrites*, a sulphuret of iron. These pyrites are very extensively diffused, and are said to be worth about £2 a ton. Pity it is that even this trifle should be lost to the poor quarryman, who has only to lay them aside when wheeling away his rubbish till they accumulate to such a quantity as to be worth a purchaser's notice, but who does not know where to find a customer.

The Lomonds were now again left to their solitude and silence, a few stray persons visiting them only from curiosity, to see the place and its productions which had caused such excitement. But the mania did not abate all at once. A village patriarch, skilled in fairy lore, entertained some of the gold-seekers with the following legend, which had the effect of sending them in search of the precious metal elsewhere. According to this ancient, a fairy, in times long gone by, appeared on a summer gloaming to a boy herding cattle in the place indicated by the following doggerel, and told him that—

If Auchindownie cock does not crow,
If Balmain horn does not blaw,
I'll shew you the gold in *Largo Lane*.

'But,' added this benevolent son of Puck, 'if I leave you when these happen—for I must then return home immediately—take you notice where the brindled ox lies down, and there you will find the gold.' The cock crow and the horn blew. The fairy vanished, but the boy observed where the brindled ox lay down; but then he did not reflect upon the need of marking the place, but ran home, in his impatience to communicate the delightful information he had received, and on his return found that the brindled ox had risen and left the place; and as he could not determine the spot, the gold still awaits the search of some more reflective and painstaking person. Of course, one and another of the narrator's auditors thought himself such a person, and hid him away to the conical hill that rises so conspicuously at the entrance to the estuary of the Forth. What success attended them there we have not the means of knowing, but we have seen it stated in a local newspaper, that a specimen of the shining substance found in that place had been sent to the editor, and he pronounces it more like gold than the crystals brought him from the Lomond Hills. But 'like,' says the proverb, 'is an ill mark;' and we hope the gold-diggers of Fife will consider themselves as having been already sufficiently deceived by appearances.

The mania lasted fully three weeks, not that any one person was under its influence all that time—for, singularly enough, the man who had been once there rarely if ever returned—but, like an epidemic, it spread wide, and only ceased by a change in the intellectual atmosphere. There could not be less than 300 persons upon an average each day upon the hill, either searching for the supposed treasure, or waiting to ascertain the result from those that did. This would make an aggregate of 6300 in the whole time; but let us keep much within the mark, and take the number convened during that period at 5000. Many of these were men earning 15s. a week; but let us put them all down at 1s. 6d per day each, and allow 1s. for the expense incurred in their going to and from the place. This will make half-a-crown lost and expended by every one of them. This calculation makes L.30 a day, and L.630 for the whole period. Now, we are fully persuaded, that though all the pyrites carried off had been gold in the proportion in which it seemed in the substance, it would not have realised this sum, which is about the price of 200 ounces of gold; so that, in the aggregate, the diggers would have been losers, though some of them individually might have been gainers. But the gainers would have been few in proportion to the whole, for we observed that not more than one man in twenty found even the pyrites, which are probably still more extensively diffused than gold itself ever is, even in the regions where it is now known to prevail: so that the wages of the nineteen unsuccessful men are to be calculated along with those of the successful one; and then it follows, that unless the 'findings' of the latter at the close of the day are equal to the wages of twenty men, there is no increase of capital to the country, no gain upon the whole. Then the man who was lucky at one time, was unlucky at another—like a poacher who snares three hares in a night, but does not snare another for a week, while he has been unable to work during the day, and, in the end, his losses have counterbalanced his gains. Then if this phantom had proved a reality, all the mines and mills within a wide range of the place would have been instantly abandoned, and it must have taken a long time, indeed, to reproduce the capital thus lost to the country. In fine, it must have become necessary to fix a rent upon the diggings, in order to constitute a right to labour in them; and still further, to levy a tax to provide a police, if not a military force, to preserve order; and after these deductions are made, together with the incomes derived from previous occupations, and the great uncertainty connected with the vocation

—to say nothing of the labour and discomforts to be endured—we cannot think gold-digging a profitable or desirable pursuit.

COMPETITION AND MONOPOLY.

A MEMORANDUM just issued by that active body, the Sanitary Association, contains the following amusing and instructive account of the memorable competition between the great London water-companies forty years ago, and of the close monopoly in which that reckless and ruinous struggle ended:—

'In 1810, a water mania, like our recent railway mania, suddenly broke out; and the principle of competition, to which the legislature had all along looked for the protection of the public, was put upon its trial. Two powerful companies, which had been several years occupied in obtaining their acts and setting up their machinery, now took the field—one, the West Middlesex, attacking the old monopolists on their western flank; the other, the East London, invading their territory from the opposite quarter. At the same time, a band of dashing Manchester speculators started the Grand Junction Company with a flaming prospectus, and boldly flung their pipes into the very thick of the tangled net-work which now spread in every direction beneath the pavement of the hotly-contested streets.

'These Grand-Junction men quite astonished the town by the magnificence of their promises. "Copious streams" of water, derived, by the medium of the Grand Junction Canal, from the rivers Colne and Brent: "always pure and fresh, because always coming in"—"high service, free of extra charge;" above all, "unintermittent supply, so that customers may do without cisterns;" such were a few of the seductive allurements held out by these interlopers to tempt deserters from the enemy's camp.

'The West Middlesex Company, in its opening circulars, also promised "unlimited supplies" to the very "house-tops," of water "clear and bright from the gravelly bottom of the Thames, thirteen miles above London Bridge." The East London was not behindhand with the trumpet; and its "skilful" directors, by paying dividends in rapid succession out of capital, raised their L.100 shares to the enormous premium of L.130 before they had well got their machinery into play. Meanwhile the South London (or Vauxhall) Company was started—in 1805—on the other side of the river, with a view to wrest from its old rulers the watery dominion of the south. The war was not, however, carried on in a very royal sort; for, as the travelling mountebank drives six-in-hand through a country town to entice the gaping provincials to his booth, so these water-jugglers went round the streets of London, throwing up rival jets-d'eau from their mains, to prove the alleged superiority of their engines, and to captivate the fancy of hesitating customers.

'The New River Company, thus put upon its mettle, boldly took up the gauntlet. It erected new forcing-engines, changed its remaining wooden pipes for iron, more than doubled its consumption of coal, reduced its charges, augmented its supplies, issued a contemptuous rejoinder to its adversaries, and, appealing as an "old servant" to the public for support, engaged in a war of extermination.

'For seven years, the battle raged incessantly. The combatants sought—and openly avowed it—not their own profit, but their rivals' ruin. Tenants were taken on almost any terms. Plumbers were bribed to *tout*, like omnibus cads, for custom. Such was the rage for mere numerical conquest, that a line of pipes would be often driven down a long street, to serve one new customer at the end. Arrears remained uncollected, lest offence should be given and influence impaired. Capricious tenants amused themselves by changing from one main to another, as they might taste this or that tap of beer. The more credulous citizens, relying on the good faith of the "public servants"—as these once powerful water-lords now humbly called themselves—were simpletons enough, on the strength of their promises, to abandon their wells, to sell off their force-pumps, and to erect water-closets or baths in the upper storeys of their houses. In many streets, there were three lines of pipes laid down, involving triple leakage, triple interest on capital,

triple administrative charges, triple pumping and storage costs, and a triple army of turncocks—the whole affording a less effective supply than would have resulted from a single well-ordered service. In this desperate struggle vast sums of money were sunk. The recently-established companies worked at a ruinous loss; and such as kept up a show of prosperity were, in fact, like the East London Company, paying dividends out of capital. The New River Company's dividends went down from L.500 to L.23 per share per annum. In the border-line districts, where the fiercest conflicts took place, the inhabitants sided with one or other of the contending parties. Some noted with delight the humbled tone of the old arbitrary monopolists, and heartily backed the invaders. Some old-stagers stuck to the ancient companies, and to the faces of familiar turncocks. These paid; but many shrewd fellows put off the obsequious collectors, and contrived to live water-rate free. Thus the honest, as usual, paid for the knaves; and the ultimate burden of all these squandered resources fell—also as usual—on society at large.

Such a state of things could not last; and it came to a conclusion which experience, had it been invoked, might have led parliament to anticipate. For, scarcely a century before, the two chartered East India Companies, after five years' internecine war, had coalesced to form that gigantic confederacy which for years monopolised the Indian trade, and rose to an unexampled pitch of corporate power and aggrandisement, at the cost of the mercantile community.

Just so, in 1817, the great water-companies coalesced against the public, and coolly portioned out London between them. Their treatment, on this occasion, of the tenants so lately flattered and cajoled, will never be effaced from the public memory. Batches of customers were handed over by one water-company to another, not merely without their consent, but without even the civility of a notice. Old tenants of the New River Company, who had taken their water for years, and had been their thick-and-thin supporters through the battle, found themselves ungratefully turned over, without previous explanation, to drink the "puddle" supplied by the Grand Junction Company. The abated rates were immediately raised, not merely to the former amount, but to charges from 25 to 400 per cent. more than they had been before the competition. The solemnly-promised high service was suppressed, or made the pretext for a heavy extra charge. Many people had to regret "selling their force-pumps as old lead," or fixing water-closets on their upper floors, on the faith of these treacherous contractors. Those who had fitted up their houses with pipes, in reliance on the guarantee of *uninterrupting pressure*, found themselves obliged either to sacrifice the first outlay, or to expend on cisterns and their appendages further sums, varying from L.10 or L.20 up to L.50—and even, in many cases, L.100. When tenants thus unhandsonely dealt by expressed their indignation, and demanded redress, they were "jocosely" reminded by smiling secretaries that the competition was over, and that those who were dissatisfied with the companies' supplies were quite at liberty to set up pumps of their own.

Thus as, in political affairs, anarchy invariably leads to despotism, so, in commerce, subversive competition always ends its disorderly and ruinous course in monopoly, which, whether avowed or tacit, individual or collective, is but despotism in a lower sphere.

The cure for these evils lies in the competitive contract-system, which brings competition to bear *for*, instead of *in*, the field of supply, so as to obviate the reckless multiplication of establishments, and capitals, and staffs, for the performance of a service for which one would suffice. Evidence shews that the water-companies might be bought out, so as to clear the way for the consolidation of the water-supply with the drainage and other connected sanitary services, under a public authority, responsible to the rate-payers through parliament, and charged to supervise the due execution of the works by contractors competing freely, on open tender, in the public market—a system obviously calculated to secure for the public the best possible service at the lowest possible rates. By empowering such an authority to buy the companies out in full, with money borrowed at 3 or 3½

per cent., we should come into possession of their works at an annual charge for interest, less, by nearly two-fifths, than our present annual payment to the companies; by consolidating the nine establishments thus acquired, we should save more than half the present working costs; and by the further consolidations referred to above, for which this first one would prepare the ground, we should still more reduce our annual charges, and still more improve our sanitary condition.

MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL:

A STATUETTE.

My white archangel, with thy steady eyes
Outlooking on this silent, ghost-filled room,
Thy clasped hands wrapped on thy sheathed sword or
doom,
Thy firm-closed lips, not made for human sighs,
Kisses, or smiles, or writhing agonies,
But for divine exhorting, heavenly song,
Bold, righteous counsel, sweet from seraph tongue—
Beautiful angel, strong as thou art wise,
Would that thy sight could make me wise and strong!
Would that this sword of thine, which idle lies
Stone-planted, could wake up and gleam among
The crowd of demons that with eager cries
Howl in my heart temptations of world's wrong!
Lama Sabachthani! How long—how long!

Michael, great leader of the hosts of God,
Warror with Satan for the body of him
Whom living, God had loved—If cherubim
With cherubim contend for one poor clod
Of human dust, with sin-stained feet that trod
Through the wide deserts of Heaven's chastisement—
Are there not ministering angels sent
To strive with evil ones that roam abroad
Clutching our living souls? 'The living, still
The living, they shall praise Thee.' Let some great
Invisible spirit enter in and fill
The howling chambers of hearts desolate,
There stand like thee, O Michael, strong and wise,
My white archangel with the steadfast eyes!

WAGES HEIGHTENED IN CONSEQUENCE OF IMPROVEMENT OF MACHINERY.

It is stated in a report of the Commissioners appointed in 1832 to inquire concerning the employment of women and children in factories, that 'in the cotton-mill of Messrs Houldsworth, in Glasgow, a spinner employed on a mule of 336 spindles, and spinning cotton 120 hanks to the pound, produced in 1823, working 74½ hours a week, 46 pounds of yarn, his net weekly wages for which amounted to 27s. 7d. Ten years later, the rate of wages having in the meantime been reduced 13 per cent., and the time of working having been lessened to 69 hours, the spinner was enabled by the greater perfection of the machinery to produce on a mule of the same number of spindles, 52½ pounds of yarn of the same fineness, and his net weekly earnings were advanced from 27s. 7d. to 29s. 10d.' Similar results from similar circumstances were experienced in the Manchester factories. The cheapening of the article produced by help of machinery increases the demand for the article; and there being consequently a need for an increased number of workmen, the elevation of wages follows as a matter of course. Nor is this the only benefit which the working-man derives in the case, for he shares with the community in acquiring a greater command over the necessities which machinery is concerned in producing.

—Condensed from a Lecture by G. R. Porter to the Wandsworth Literary and Scientific Association.

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